

for any amount of time for the defense of the Panamanian nation. . . .

To place this in the annals of Latin American history, the following are the actions that show the uncontrolled violations of principles and norms of international law—the embargo, the economic blockade, and the threat of using military force against Panama as an instrument of pressure and oppression. . . .

All these actions paint a clear and vivid picture of an undeclared war against the Republic of Panama, against the Panamanian people's will for peace, and against the nation's will to defend the neutrality of the Panama Canal. . . .

The closing of banks and the paralysis of the financial center—both caused by economic aggression of a foreign country which in this way has made a mockery of the trust given to it by Panamanians for 85 years—shows us and the world that our monetary system is vulnerable and, thus, so is our national economy. This closure, which has been a consequence of an arbitrary and illegal dollar embargo affecting not only our national treasury, but also individual depositors from different countries, has abruptly restricted the cash that circulated in the country and has had terrible effects on the economy of Panamanians, who have been deprived of a currency that enabled them to satisfy their basic and daily requirements.

This unprecedented action shames the civilized world, because for the first time it uses the weapon of financial piracy in relations among nations. It also shows there is a need to make a detailed and responsible study of the operational value of our monetary system within the framework of economic reality and our national sovereignty. I firmly believe in this need because the government has the duty to take necessary measures to defend free enterprise and related organizations, such as the banking center that today is temporarily prostrated due to foreign pressures and covert or open political maneuvers. . . .

Whoever knowingly allows and tries to create difficult situations will be working against the Panamanian nation. This cannot be allowed. We have issued a cabinet decree in which we have officially announced that the Republic of Panama is experiencing an undeclared war. We declared a state of emergency throughout the country, but did not suspend constitutional guarantees, which the entire population continues to effectively enjoy. . . .

Panama will enforce compliance with the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty and the Canal Neutrality Treaty regardless of the systematic U.S. violations of these treaties, which have been repeatedly reported by the Panamanian government at all international forums. Panama reasserts before those who signed the neutrality pact with our country, before the nations that shared their anticolonial struggle with Panama, and before the whole world, that its destiny as a sovereign country is irreversible and that its determination to comply and enforce compliance with the treaties is irrevocable. . . .

U.S. plots to take back Panama Canal

by D.E. Pettingell

The Reagan administration's commitment to "rid" Panama of Gen. Manuel A. Noriega, the nationalist commander in chief of the Panama Defense Forces, is now clearly only the prelude to a campaign to destroy—at whatever the price—the Panama Defense Forces itself. It is just as clearly a precondition for revoking the Carter-Torrijos Treaties that were to give total control of the Panama Canal to the Panamanians at midnight Dec. 31, 1999.

The Reagan administration has increasingly shown its total disregard for the treaties. President Reagan's decision to put the fees for canal service into an escrow account, and the deployment of hundreds of American troops to Panama above the levels stipulated in the treaties, are only the two most recent and blatant violations.

General Noriega and the PDF have declared that behind the U.S. aggression is a plot to keep the canal beyond the year 2000. Administration spokesmen such as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams, of course, deny that the attack on Noriega is an excuse to abrogate the treaties. But then, Abrams is a liar, even by his own admission, to the Congress.

Abrams recently set two conditions in order for the United States to honor the treaties: 1) that Panama becomes fully "democratized" and, 2) that the Panama Defense Forces demonstrate their ability to "defend" the canal by withdrawing from "political life."

The type of "democratic" government Abrams would impose in Panama would ask the United States to keep the canal, turning the treaties into a dead letter. The "Panamanians" whom Abrams is attempting to put in power have already asked the United States to invade their country.

Abrams's socialists cronies

"Panama must democratize, and that is part of the Carter-Torrijos agreements. It is not written down, but clearly in the

López and Pérez mission, they know that the democratization of Panama is part of the image," Abrams innovatively claimed in a March 18 Worldnet televised interview transmitted by USIA to Ibero-American capitals. He was referring to former Colombian President Alfonso López Michelsen and Socialist International leader Carlos Andrés Pérez, both of whom have close ties to the drug mafia and—what is the same thing—the Panamanian opposition. In recent closed-door meetings with Abrams, Pérez committed himself to use his "moral authority," as a former Venezuelan President who supported the treaties at the time, to make sure the canal is not returned to Panama unless a "democratic" government is in place.

Former Carter administration officials now part of the pro-drug Inter-American Dialogue and the Democratic Party's National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, have joined Pérez's crusade. A closed-door three-day conference on the connection between the treaties and Panama's "democratic transition" was scheduled to be held in Georgia, to be chaired by both Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale. It had to be canceled at the last minute at the request of the Panamanian participants, who were unable to leave Panama. The conference was scheduled to begin March 16, the day of the failed coup attempt against General Noriega.

Abrams spelled out his second condition during hearings March 10 before a House subcommittee. "Deep military involvement in politics weakens the civilian and the military institutions, just as it detracts from Panama's ability to fulfill its crucial role in defense of the canal," he said, and warned, "We believe that strict adherence to the Canal Treaties by both partners is fundamental to Panama's democratic future."

The treaties: a 'serious mistake'

A campaign of lies and disinformation, charging that Panama is becoming "another Cuba," has resurrected the debate on the treaties on Capitol Hill, an issue that for awhile seemed to have been settled. For the first time since 1978, when the Senate approved the Treaties, the political faction that favors the United States holding on to the canal and breaking the treaties is becoming hegemonic.

"It is clear that the United States made a very serious mistake when it agreed to give away the canal," Rep. Connie Mack (R-Fla.) stated on his way back from Panama. Mack visited Panama March 17 in the company of Florida National Guard units deployed to Panama for "exercises." The Panamanian army has denounced such maneuvers as a violation of the treaties.

According to a spokesman for Mack, the congressman will soon send out a "Dear Colleague" letter arguing for abrogation of the treaties on the basis of Panama becoming "another Cuba." Even if General Noriega were to leave Panama, the spokesman stated, Mack does not believe there will be a stable government in the foreseeable future. His letter will be intended to test the waters, to determine the feasibility of introducing legislation to revoke the treaties.

Mack is seeking the Republican nomination for Senate, and intends to make the "canal giveaway" a key issue in his campaign. Congressional sources have argued that most of the senators who ran for reelection after voting in favor of the treaties were defeated for that reason.

Campaigning against the treaties has become an issue in the presidential race as well. Sen. Robert Dole recently bragged about having voted against the treaties 10 years ago, and pledged that if he is elected President, he would seriously consider dumping them. "We may want to go back and take another look at the canal," he said Feb. 28. "We may not want to turn it over to Panama."

But the most violent opponent of the treaties is no doubt Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who led the campaign against them in 1978. Ever since, he has not missed an opportunity to attack them. His latest action came March 14, when he attempted, but failed, to introduce several amendments to the Intelligence Oversight Act which would have "suspended" the canal treaties.

Helms's amendments called for the "President of the United States" to "notify the Government of Panama of the intention of the United States to suspend, should it be proven to be required by the supreme national security interests of the United States, the operation of any provision of the Panama Canal Treaties of 1978 mandating the withdrawal of the United States military personnel or the closure of any United States military base protecting the Panama Canal."

Helms's new amendments are a variation of a similar measure introduced by Sen. Steve Symms (R-Idaho) in October 1987, calling for "voiding" the treaties on the basis of the refusal of the Panamanian government to "ratify" the "DeConcini Reservation," which is not part of the treaties. The amendment was defeated by only 20 votes. The reservation, authored by Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) in 1978, demands that the United States be allowed to use unilateral military force in Panama after the year 2000 if Congress or the administration considers the canal imperiled. Sources now believe that, in light of the strong anti-Panamanian sentiment in Washington, were a new vote on the Symms amendment to be taken now, the Senate would pass it with little debate.

For Panamanian nationalists, the issue is not negotiable. In rejecting the so-called DeConcini Reservation in 1978, the late Gen. Omar Torrijos stated: "The Republic of Panama declares that its political independence, territorial integrity, and self-determination are guaranteed by the unshakeable will of the Panamanian people. Therefore, the Republic of Panama will reject, in unity and with decisiveness and firmness, any attempt by any country to intervene in its internal or external affairs."

Were the United States to continue pushing for the abrogation of the treaties, it might provoke, inadvertently, the much-needed unity of Ibero-America that has so shamefully been lacking.